

Feed My Sheep

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I feel about as out of place as a rabbi in the mission home to be in this position. I have been here at BYU for fifteen years and have seen some outstanding speakers and heard some great sermons preached from this and other pulpits for devotional assemblies. When the President's office called and asked if I would fulfill this particular assignment, I searched in vain for excuses but could find none. I hearkened back to the teachings that came from my home: I was taught obedience as a very young man. I'm happy for that teaching. I'll never forget the time when I was eighteen and signed a professional baseball contract. As I was ready to go to spring training for the first time, my mother said, "Glen, I've got a piece of advice for you."

"Yes, Mother dear, what would that be?"

"Put on a clean pair of socks every day."

I thought, "Gee, that's good advice." But after the eighth day I couldn't even get my shoes on. As a result of that training, when I was asked to occupy this position, I immediately said yes.

The school experience is one of problem solving, of decision making. We know that the prime objective of this and any school is the removal of ignorance. We also know that many schools steep themselves in tradition and in

effect teach you and me how to live in the past. What I'm trying to do this day with the few things I would like to say is help you to make decisions that are meaningful and to become an adept problem solver. Young people today are constantly challenged. You're forced to choose between alternatives, compelled to make value judgments, and certainly obliged to solve problems and pressured to make decisions. Many of these decisions will have an influence on your opportunity to enjoy an exalted hereafter and will have a lasting effect for eternities to come.

Making Important Decisions Once

I am certainly no sage, and I do not speak to you from an ivory tower, but I do submit to you the proposition that you make as many decisions as you possibly can in advance and make them only once. How often we say, "Gee, I've got this decision to make today," or, "I've got this problem to solve." We continually redecide and re-solve. That isn't necessary. Just think of all the things in your life that can be decided but one time. For example, isn't it

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terrible for the brethren to have to spend all Saturday evening trying to decide whether or not to attend priesthood meeting Sunday morning or for the sisters to spend a whole week wondering about Relief Society or whether they can get to their Primary assignments?

There are so many things in life that can be solved in advance and but once. We have to make decisions, I believe, when we're emotion-free, when we're clear to think and to think rationally. In baseball, for example, prior to the game, the two managers or the two coaches meet with the umpires and go over what are called the "ground rules." The ground rules are unique little rules that pertain just to a particular baseball park. For example, if the ball trickles into the dugout, the ball is dead and the runners advance a base. This is decided before the game ever starts. But can you imagine making that kind of decision when the University of Utah and BYU are playing a baseball game? We'd never arrive at a logical decision because in the middle of the game we are not emotion-free.

I see people sitting in the stands and watching a young quarterback make what they consider to be a great decision. Thirty-five thousand fans screaming in his ear, the ball on the four-yard line, fourth and goal, his team behind by a few points, and he needs a touchdown. That quarterback comes out and makes the decision, and his team goes in for the touchdown and wins a very important football game. The people sit back and say, 'Gee, that kid thinks well on his feet. Boy, what a fine young thinker he is.' Well, they give him credit for being something that he really may not be, because that decision was probably made far in advance. Under the guidance of a very capable coach, this young man has discussed strategy and learned about football hour after hour. The coach as said, "Look, when there are thirty-five thousand fans in the stands, when it's fourth and goal and we really need a touchdown, these are the one or two plays that you have as

alternatives. You do not have the whole range of three or four hundred plays; you have but one or two that will really help you."

I believe that's what we have to do in our lives—to make decisions in advance. I know that we have to make boy-girl decisions far in advance, because if we wait till after the dance and after the malt and the hamburger and we're close to each other and are feeling the emotions of being near someone who is very attractive, we're never going to make the decision that should be made. We're going to make the wrong decision. And so I suggest to you this day that you make as many decisions as you possibly can, make them one time, make them in advance, and make them when you are absolutely emotion-free.

Five Helps for Successful Decision Making

There are some things that have helped me in decision making, and perhaps they'd be helpful to you. In 1 Nephi, Nephi's brothers came to him with a question. Their father, Lehi, had made some explanations about doctrine, and they really didn't understand it. They asked Nephi, "Help us with this. What should we do?"

Nephi's question to them was "Have ye inquired of the Lord?" (1 Nephi 15:8). That helps Glen Tuckett: first, inquire of the Lord.

The second step that's helpful to me is also illustrated in the scriptures. As Adam offered sacrifice, an angel appeared and said, "Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?"

Adam's answer was, "I know not, save the Lord commanded me" (Moses 5:6). That's excellent advice, I think, for you and me. We do something because our Heavenly Father commanded us. I'm sure that someone once said, "Nephi, why do you keep two records? One record would be plenty."

Nephi answered, "I really don't know except the Lord commanded me" (see 1 Nephi 19). Neither Nephi nor his questioner knew that Martin Harris was going to lose a few

pages and that a few other things were going to happen.

I think my problem is maybe like yours. Once in a while I inquire of the Lord, I'm commanded of the Lord through inspiration, and maybe the answer really doesn't fit. Sometimes I have the audacity to say, "Now, Lord, let me explain the problem one more time."

I remember that when I was a young man my father told me to do something, and I had the audacity to say, "Dad, why?" (That was before the new freedoms became prevalent.)

Dad said, "Because I told you so." Gee, that was a good reason! That was a really good reason. I believe it should be reason enough for you and me when the Lord commands us to do things we don't understand.

The third point about problem solving is illustrated in the life of the Savior. The entourage of which the twelve-year-old Jesus was a part had started their journey northward after having been in the city of their birth to observe the Passover. They'd gone about a day's journey and found that the boy Jesus was not with them. We're told that it took three days before they discovered this twelve-year-old discussing weighty matters with very wise men in the temple. His mother was greatly exercised and wondered why he had thus dealt with them. And his answer was very, very important, because he said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). I believe that it helps in problem solving to be about our Father's business.

The fourth help to me in solving problems comes from the Savior's teachings to the Nephites. Third Nephi records the Savior's appearance to the Saints and the great advice he gave. He told the people what to name the church and other important things they should do. Toward the latter part of the twenty-seventh chapter of 3 Nephi, he asked them the question, "What manner of men ought ye to be?" As only the Savior could teach, he didn't let them go home and think about it; he taught

them there on the spot. He said, "Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

Here is the fifth point that I think helps me in problem solving. When the Savior had glimpsed the other side and returned to visit with his chosen on the shore of the sea of Tiberias, he confronted one by saying, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

And Peter said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

The Savior responded, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:16).

These things have been helpful to me in solving problems: to inquire of the Lord; to do what I'm commanded to do, knowing not why, save the Lord commanded me; to be about his business; to use the Savior as an example; and, finally, to feed his sheep. I'm sure that all of us are in the "sheep-feeding business"—either as shepherds or as consumers. Those of you who consume will soon feed. I have often thought, "What did the Lord really mean when he told Simon to feed his sheep?" I have four little personal sheep of my own who call me "Dad," and I have many, many other sheep that I have adopted.

Feed Your Sheep with Love

What do these sheep really need to be fed? I think first and foremost they need to be fed a thing called *love*. When the Man of Nazareth started his ministry, those that were in political power at the time more or less backed him into a corner and tried to get him to incriminate himself by giving the wrong answer to the question they were going to ask. They asked him, "What's the first and great commandment? What's the most important of all the rules and laws and do's and don'ts that we're trying to live?" Brother Talmage tells us that in the law of Moses, the decalogue, there were 732 do's and don'ts—little picayunish things. Other sriptorians tell us there were 3,600 do's and don'ts in the law of Moses.

The Savior did not hesitate but said that the first and great commandment is “Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God.” And without being asked, he said, “The second is like unto it, Thou shalt *love* thy neighbor” (see Matthew 22:36–39; emphasis added). So his answer to the question contained the word *love* twice.

John, who chronicled the life of the Savior, tried to tell you and me how we’re made in the similitude of our Heavenly Father and finally, in the fourth chapter of his first epistle, told us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). That’s a great one-word description or definition of our Heavenly Father.

Paul, who wrote and traveled and did so many things, talked about faith, hope, charity, long-suffering. But one time he said that the most important of all is love. I’m naïve enough to believe this—that the most important of all is love.

Burt Bacharach, who writes your kind of music (and my kind of music, too, by the way), a few years ago wrote a melody to Hal David’s words: “What the world needs now is love, sweet love. That’s the only thing that there’s just too little of. . . . No, not just for some, but for everyone. Lord, we don’t need another mountain.” We’ve got plenty of mountains. What the world *really* needs now is love, sweet love.

A few years ago the Green Bay Packers won the Super Bowl for the second consecutive year and for ten years had dominated professional football. After that victory, the television crew was in the dressing room, and the interviewer had the microphone right under the chin of the great and late coach Vince Lombardi. His question was “How come the Packers win all the time? Your blocking techniques, tackling techniques, game plan, kicking game—all are very similar to everyone else’s in the league. How come the Packers win all the time?”

Vince Lombardi was a very emotional man, a very verbal man, but it took him a long while to get it out. Finally he wiped a tear from his cheek and said, “The Packers win because the

Packers love each other.” If you’ve ever seen Henry Jordan or Ray Nitschke, you know that only a mother could love those guys. This is the thing that makes the gospel so vital. The gospel, the good news of the Lord and Savior, is the gospel of love. That’s the thing that makes it go.

I must confess to you that, up until fifteen years ago (I got married about fifteen years ago), I had but one prayer in my heart. There was only one thing that I wanted to do. I prayed morning and night, unashamedly, that I could be the shortstop for the New York Yankees. That was my prayer. I don’t pray that any more. (The Mets maybe, but not the Yankees.)

My prayer now is “I want to be the father of lovely and virtuous young ladies.” I’ve been blessed with four little girls. I’ve observed families that have done a great job with their children. I went to one couple, Doctor and Sister Sundwall, and asked, “How come your kids are so good? What is it you do with them?”

They said, “Oh, we do this, this, this, and we give them plenty of love.”

I asked Dick and Shelba Simper, “How come your kids are so good? What is it you do?”

“Oh, we do this, this, this, and, oh, by the way, we give them plenty of love.” That seems to be the common denominator—give them plenty of love. What the world needs now is love, sweet love.

Just think of all the people, the neurotics, the emotionally disturbed, who are now being treated because of some deep-seated problems that could be traced back to the fact that somewhere in their lives they were deprived of love. Wouldn’t it be great if kids that needed help would just raise their hands and say, “Help”? They don’t do that. None of us does. We manifest that need in so many, many ways, and what we’re saying is that we really need love.

Develop a testimony

I wish we could feed our sheep a thing called a testimony. Webster's says that a testimony is "a statement or affirmation of fact." I've often thought about this. I've often thought, at the time of confirmation, "Wouldn't it be nice, when we lay hands on the head of the individual being confirmed and tell him to receive the Holy Ghost, if we could say, 'And, by the way, receive ye a testimony?'" Evidently, our Heavenly Father didn't want it to work that way, because a plan similar to that was rejected in the premortal existence. Evidently a testimony is something that we have to earn and work for ourselves.

Testimonies are an unusual kind of thing. My life is also a little bit strange because sometimes I am up on the mountain. Up on the mount, I've got a beautiful view of Zion. It's clear up there, and it's crisp, and I feel good. I'm living the way I should. But then other times, when I'm not doing the things that I should be doing, I lapse down into the valley of despair. As we sang the opening song, a great feeling came over me when I hit the same note that you were singing. It's nice to be in tune, and, similarly, it's nice to be in step and to be doing what our Heavenly Father would like us to do.

Now I'd like to draw a couple of analogies about testimonies and other things. I'm involved in the area of physical education, and I would like you to know that the law of testimony is very, very similar to the law of muscle. The law of muscle is this: we take a muscle and overload it; when we work it hard it grows. It gets bigger and more efficient. Take the biceps, for example, the muscle that makes your arm bend up and down. When we overload that muscle we work on it and work on it and every day overload it and we find that the muscle gets stronger and stronger and stronger. (A person with a well-developed biceps is easy to recognize. He goes around in short-sleeved shirts; he gyrates and gestures, and we just know he's

got biceps. We say, "Gee, there goes a guy with a biceps." It just sticks out all over him.)

But, you know, if a person forgets about his biceps and quits using it, in about the same amount of time that it took to develop that great strength, the muscle will go right back down to where it was when he started. Muscles are just like testimonies; testimonies have to be used. They have to be overloaded, they have to be borne, and they have to be expressed. As we do those things, they get bigger and bigger and bigger. Others notice and say, "There goes somebody with a testimony." It sticks out just exactly as a biceps does.

I would much rather have an emotional testimony than an intellectual testimony. I can read Hugh Nibley's book *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, I can read Jack West's *Trial of the Stick of Joseph*, and there's no way that the Book of Mormon can be anything but what it purports to be. But that's an intellectual testimony. I remember, when I was a youngster in school, we studied prehistoric man. I knew all about prehistoric man—Neanderthal man, Cro-Magnon man, Peking man. In fact I wrote a paper on Peking man. I knew where he lived, how he lived, the kind of job he had, the kind of girl he married. I was really a pro about prehistoric man. I even read *Fleet Foot, the Cave Boy*, which required a little extra work. A few years ago I read that a group of archaeologists and anthropologists in London got together and said, "We're really sorry, everyone, but there's no such thing as Peking man. We created him out of something that really didn't exist."

In biology, twenty-five years ago, the answer to the question "How many chromosomes in the human reproductive cell?" was simple—twenty-four. Try twenty-four on for size today and see how well you do on a biology test. There are really only twenty-three. (I don't know what happened to that other chromosome, but some of the people I see around these days make me wonder.)

I'd much rather have an emotional feeling about the gospel: the feeling that comes over you when you read the Book of Mormon and, as Moroni said, pray about it (see Moroni 10:4). You get such a good feeling. The men walking and talking on the road to Emmaus were joined by a stranger who asked questions. When they arrived at their destination, the stranger broke bread and blessed it and then he disappeared. One man said to the other, "Did not our heart burn within us . . . ?" (Luke 24:32). That's the kind of feeling that I want. I like the emotional testimony.

Motivate Yourself

I have two other quick points that help in sheep feeding. It is really important to feed sheep inspiration. We're now in an era of motivation. Everything we hear about is motivation this and motivation that. We have just concluded a great general conference. People have come up to me and said, "Oh, didn't Elder Dunn and didn't Elder Hanks motivate you?" I don't mean to be sacrilegious or anything, but my answer to them is "No, they didn't motivate me at all, but they surely inspired me to motivate myself." Inspiration comes from without, and, I believe, motivation comes from within. We've each got our own little motivator, just as we have our own little cholesterol maker somewhere in our bodies. That motivator makes you and me do things that are really worthwhile.

When I think of inspiration, I think of the things that come from without. I think of the young boy in fifth grade in Murray, Utah, who was taking a class in music appreciation and learned a song entitled "Stouthearted Men": "Start me with ten who are stouthearted men, and I'll soon give you ten thousand more." That's a fight song, and I'm just naïve enough to believe that statement. Only a handful thought that the Man of Nazareth really was what he said he was, and Christianity has grown so greatly. There's another quote that says, "Hearts can inspire other hearts with

their fire. And the strong obey when a strong man shows them the way." There are strong men around, there are strong people around, and I believe that it's incumbent upon you and me to find out who they are and to pattern our lives after them. There are not enough good patterns in the world at the present time, but the greatest ones are our Church leaders and others right here at BYU.

I find a new hero every time I read the standard works of the Church. If I had time I'd tell you about some of them. I would, however, like to tell you the best inspiration story I know, which is a football story about a young man playing fullback for the University of Oklahoma. The University of Oklahoma had gone ten years without losing a conference football game, had gone forty-seven straight games without losing to anyone; Army, Navy, Notre Dame, Texas, Alabama—you name the team, they played them and beat them. But on this particular day, while playing the University of Nebraska at Norman, Oklahoma, it looked as if they were going to be beaten. It was late in the game, they had the ball deep in their own territory, and they were behind. The winning streak was going to go down the drain, but in a second down and long-yardage situation the ball was handed off to the tailback, a young man named Billy Vessels, who ran sixty-seven yards for a touchdown that snatched victory from defeat. His run prolonged that great winning streak. All of the news media said, "That touchdown run was, without a doubt, the best run in the history of Oklahoma football and maybe in the history of football per se."

On Monday, when the coaches looked at the film, they found that something strange had happened on this particular play. Billy Vessels did make a great run, but the play went differently than they had thought. The quarterback, Claude Arnold, took the snap from center and handed off to Vessels, the tailback, who was going to run around the right end. The

fullback was a boy named Leon Heath; he wore number 40 on his jersey. His job on this play was to hook the end, to block him in, so Vessels could run around him. As the ball was snapped, the end came across too far. The average player would have thought, "Get back over there. The coach said you'd be right there. Get over there." Players move around from time to time, and they are not always located where we coaches draw them on the board. Instead of trying to hook the end, Heath just drove him out of the play, and Vessels cut inside, got around the corner, and eventually was confronted by the cornerback. Vessels made a quick left, cut behind the line of scrimmage, and ran into the offside linebacker. What a hit! Two great athletes going full speed. Vessels was struggling to stay on his feet and eventually to break the tackle. Just when it looked as if he were going down, into the film came number 40, the man who had just blocked the end. Heath got a shoulder pad into the linebacker and knocked him off the tackle. Vessels spun free, balanced on his hand, hit for the sidelines and then headed for the tall grass of the end zone, which was about sixty yards away. Billy Vessels—six foot two, 210 pounds of Heisman-trophy-winning, All-American tailback—could run like the wind. As he was on his way to the end zone, here came the weak-side safety, the man that plays on the weak side of the formation. You could just see that he was going to get Vessels on about the fifteen-yard line. When Vessels got to the twenty-five, he had to make up his mind what he was going to do—run over him, stop, call time, say, "King's x," or something else. Just as he had to make up his mind, into the film came number 40, Leon Heath, moving like a freight train. He hit that safety, put him about eight rows up in the grandstand, and Vessels walked into the end zone for the greatest run in the history of Oklahoma football.

That's inspiration. That's an inspiring kind of a performance. If you and I are going to get

where we would like to get eventually, we had better not only complete that first assignment but also go get a linebacker. And if we really want an exalted hereafter, we had better hitch up our belts and go get the safety.

Be Committed

My final point is a thing called commitment, which means you are going to do what you say you are going to do. I think about all the commitments that come into our lives. If I could just feed the sheep with whom I work daily this thing called commitment, that would be great. I have seen what a few committed individuals can do, and so have you.

As a young man working in a bishopric, I taught a lesson to the teachers quorum about commitment. One of the stories was about an airplane pilot who was going to land on an aircraft carrier. After three pages of verbal intrigue, the whole crux of the matter was that, when the pilot got to a certain point in his descent, he had to go land on a little moving dot, the aircraft carrier. Can you imagine it? Before he got there he could go up, down, left, right, and come back and try again and again. But once he went past a certain point, he was committed to go land on that little dot. I thought that was really something.

Now let's change the setting to 1974. How would you like to be lying on your back on the launching pad, looking at all those dials and switches and hear someone say, "10, 9, 8, . . ."? "Oh, my gosh, how did I get in here?" you'd think. They tell me that until the count gets to four you can call time, push the off button, abort the mission, and you don't have to go. But once it gets past four, you are committed. Total commitment? Clear to the moon! That is total commitment.

I believe this has to happen to us in our lives in the Church; we have got to commit totally. The sooner we do that, the better off we are going to be. We have got to do it. I would

like to conclude with another sports story that really depicts this thing called commitment.

It was homecoming day at Champaign-Urbana, the home of the fighting Illini—the University of Illinois. They were playing Wisconsin for the Big Ten football championship. With seventy-two thousand fans in the stands, late in the ball game, Illinois had a lead of seven to three. Wisconsin had the football on Illinois' four-yard line, first and goal, with four minutes left to play. Get the picture? A field goal won't tie it or win it; they have got to score a touchdown. Illinois had a little linebacker who, during the time out prior to putting the ball in play, went around and shook guys, saying, "We have got to stop them! It is important that we win this football game." Just before Wisconsin went into the huddle, this little Illinois linebacker got the Wisconsin quarterback's attention. Playing fullback for Wisconsin that year was a guy named Alan "the horse" Ameche—six foot three, 230 pounds, Heisman trophy winner, two-year All-American, later the all-pro fullback for the Baltimore Colts—a moose of a man. Your grandmother would have known who was going to get the football on the four-yard line. But this little linebacker got the quarterback's attention and said, "Hey, send Ameche at me." Now, I have been on the line of scrimmage, and I would just as soon Ameche went over there someplace. This is like saying, "President, let me do it"; "Bishop, I'll do it"; "Dad, I'd be happy to do it." The linebacker felt, "The whole

game depends on how I play. Send him at me." The quarterback thought, "You're as good as the next guy;" and he handed off to Ameche in the direction of the taunting linebacker. When the dust settled, this little guy screwed his hat back on straight again, and, with the ball on the three-yard line, got the quarterback's attention and hollered, "Hey, send Ameche at me again." Four times he egged him on: "Send Ameche at me." When the smoke cleared and the dust settled, the ball was on the ten-yard line, and Illinois won a great football game because one little guy on that team had enough courage to invite them to "send Ameche at me!" that's commitment!

As the Savior began his ministry, he needed helpers. He went to Peter and Andrew and said, "Come follow me." And they straightway left their nets and followed the Savior—*Commitment!* He went to James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and said, "Come follow me." And they immediately left their father and their boat and followed the Savior (see Matthew 4). That's commitment! These are the things that we have to do. If we are going to be saved in our Heavenly Father's kingdom, I believe it becomes incumbent upon you and upon me to make this decision, as others have made it. I think Joshua said it best: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). May this be our lot I pray humbly in Jesus' name. Amen.